

BACKGROUND - SOUTH VIETNAM O/B

- I. As easily understandable, no precise O/B available on Sects.
 - A. These curious groups customarily overstate their numerical strength in order to gain prestige, collect larger government subsidies.
 - B. Their mixed armament makes effectiveness estimates misleading--some units might have only hand-grenades and machetes, others the most modern arms.
- II. With above reservations, Sect O/B is roughly as follows:
 - A. Cao Dai, 16,000--located mostly north and northwest of Saigon.
 - B. Hoa Hao, 19,600--in delta rice-granary area west of Saigon.
 - C. Binh Xuyen, 4,000--in suburbs of Saigon (also in control of Saigon police force, strength of which unknown).

fact that some Sect commanders have taken fence-sitting or pro-government positions.

- A. Cao Dai General Trinh Minh The, who commands 4,300 troops, has "formally" rallied to the government. However, his loyalty is questionable.
- B. During past month, three Hoa Hao senior officers, altogether commanding "several thousand" troops, have declared allegiance to Diem government.

IV. In balance with Sect forces are following:

- A. French troops (ground forces) south of the 17th parallel--94,000.
 - 1. Of these, roughly 50,000 are in the Saigon area.
- B. Vietnamese National Army--151,000.
 - 1. Of these Vietnamese troops, 10,000 are available in Saigon area.
- C. In addition, there are 43,000 provincial police under Diem's authority.